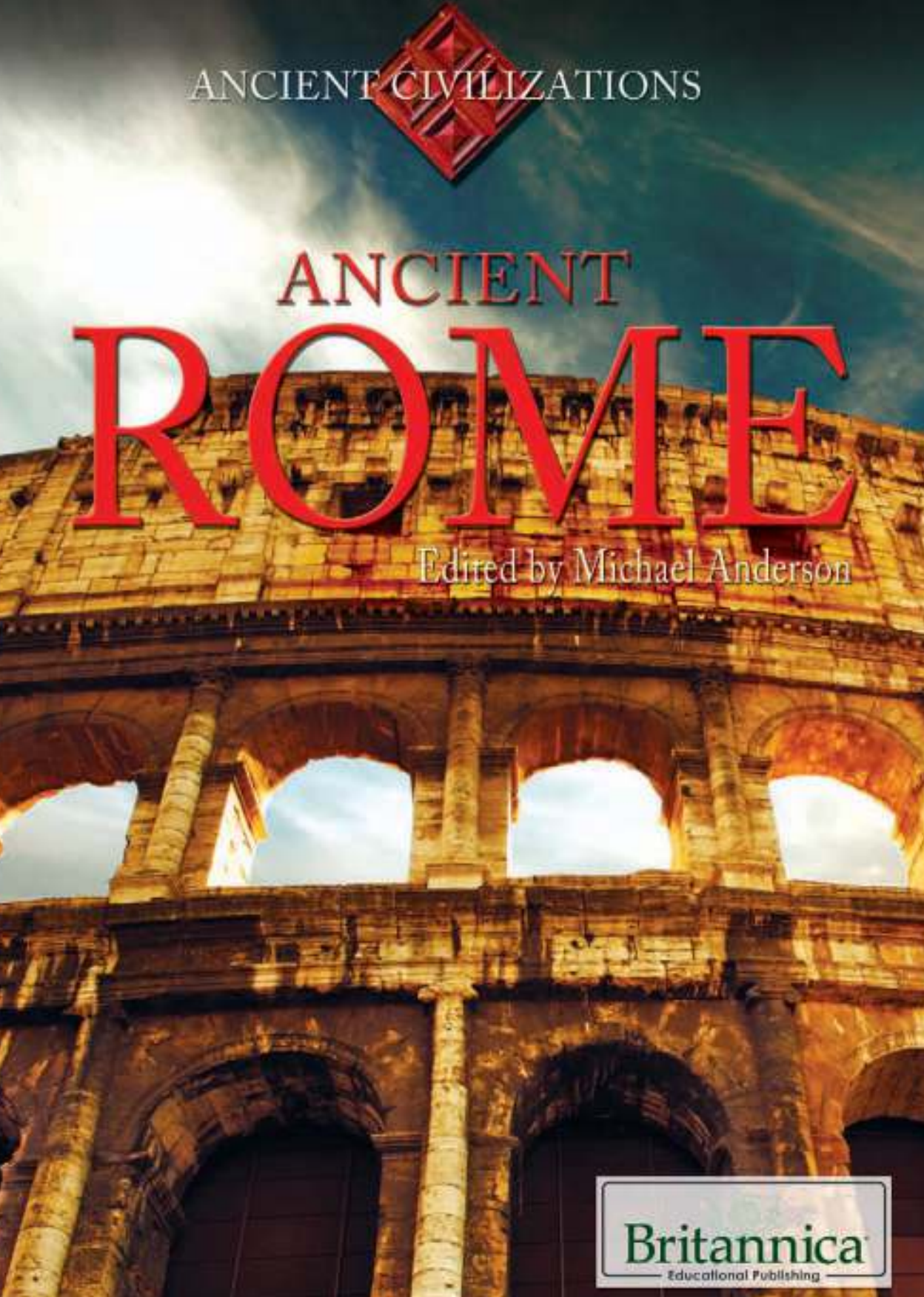
ANCIENT CIVILIZATIONS

# ANCIENT ROME

Edited by Michael Anderson



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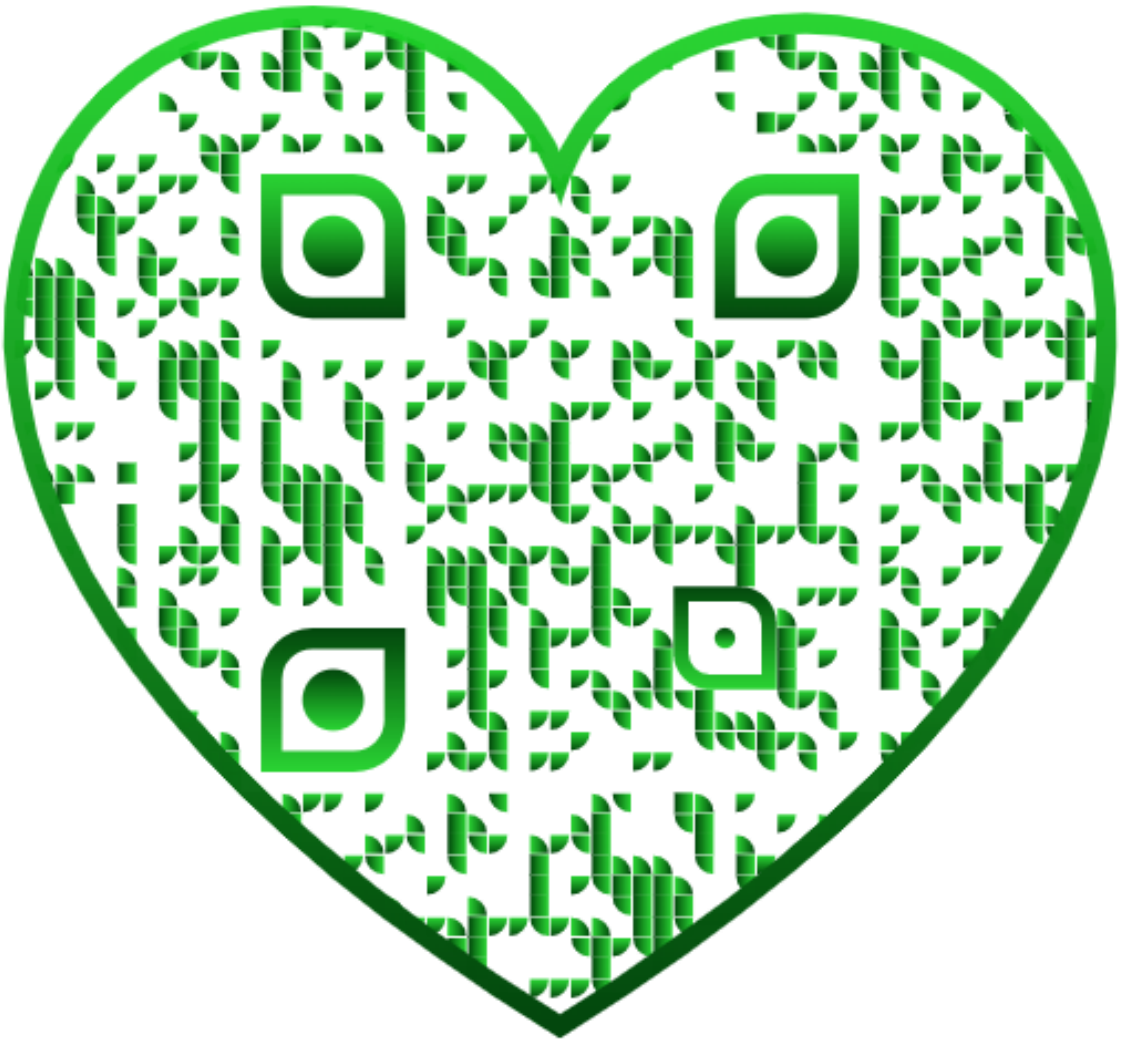

# ANCIENT ROME

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# INTRODUCTION

Julius Caesar's triumphant quote, "*Veni, vidi, vici*" ("I came, I saw, I conquered"), could be ancient Rome's rallying cry. The Romans excelled in warfare, engineering, and government, a trio of strengths that helped them become a world power. During the period of the Roman Empire, most of the known world was united under Roman rule. This volume provides a lively overview of the history of ancient Rome and highlights its many literary, architectural, and engineering achievements as well.

Rome's early history is shrouded in myth and legend. According to tradition, the city was founded by twin brothers, Romulus and Remus, in 753 BC, and Romulus served as Rome's first king. Although Romulus was a mythical figure, the kings who followed him likely existed. The last three kings of Rome were Etruscans who ruled in the 6th century BC. These kings made improvements to the city, building temples and public works such as the remarkable sewer *Cloaca Maxima*. Rome prospered and became Italy's wealthiest city.

Still, Etruscan rule was not universally appreciated. Around 509 BC the Romans revolted against the tyrannical king Tarquinius Superbus and expelled the Etruscans from

the city, making Rome a republic. Initially the aristocracy, called patricians, ran the government, while the common people, or plebeians, had little to do with it. After a long struggle, however, it was declared in 367 BC that one of Rome's two leaders, or consuls, must be a plebeian. By 350 BC plebeians were included in the dictatorship. With this rise came inclusion in the Senate. In addition, a new assembly, the *comitia tributa*, now had some sway. In this body, one man's vote was equal to all others.

Meanwhile, Rome used its military might to conquer its neighbors. In the 4th century

**Rome's Pantheon was built as a temple to the gods by Emperor Hadrian.** ***Shutterstock.com***

BC the Romans battled the Etruscans, the Latins, and the intimidating Samnites. With the final defeat of the Samnites in 295 BC, Rome ruled northern and central Italy. The ensuing conquest of the Greek city-states that occupied the south made Rome the master of all Italy. Rome skillfully united the conquered peoples. They were granted the status of allies and enjoyed self-rule and various degrees of Roman citizenship.

The Mediterranean was Rome's next target. Beginning in 264 BC, Rome fought three wars against the Carthaginians: the Punic Wars. Rome triumphed every time and finally ruled the Mediterranean Sea. Unfortunately, the young rulers of the time did not share the sage polices of the rulers before them, causing them to ruin the very countries they struggled to win.

The murder of the politician Tiberius in 133 BC triggered a century of political strife and civil war. During this time Pompey and Julius Caesar emerged as great leaders. Caesar became so powerful that 60 senators assassinated him in 44 BC. Caesar's soldiers then united behind his adopted son Octavian, who became a potent leader in his own right.

Octavian presented Rome as a republic, but most historians agree that by 31 BC the

Roman Empire had commenced. More than 200 years of relative peace and prosperity followed. Free men throughout the Empire were considered Roman citizens, and Roman law was applied in every court. Christianity slowly spread and became the Empire's official faith. At the end of this period, a line of five great emperors brought Rome to new heights. One of them, Hadrian, fortified the Empire's frontiers with a wall that still stands in parts of Britain. After the death of Marcus Aurelius in AD 180, however, a succession of short-lived emperors and Constantine's transfer of the capital to the east irreparably divided Rome. The barbarian uprisings that ensued finally toppled the Empire.

Rome was far more than imperial superiority. Trading cities were bigger than ever and featured theaters, huge arenas, and public baths. In engineering the Romans could boast an impressive road system and bridges. The Latin language is lauded for its beauty in all types of literature. Roman authors such as Virgil and Cicero are still studied today.

Ancient Rome is a fascinating study of battle and government, of engineering and art. This volume offers an intriguing look at Rome's many accomplishments, highlighting the many layers of this fertile culture.

# CHAPTER 1
## Early Rome

When the ancient Greeks were reaching the height of their glory, the power of Rome, to the west, was slowly rising. The genius of the Greeks lay in art, literature, science, and philosophy. The Romans were best in warfare, engineering, and government.

Rome rose to power gradually, with no set plan for world conquest. The Romans fought many wars and enslaved many people. By the reign of the emperor Augustus (27 BC–AD 14), most of the known world was unified and at peace under Roman rule.

### *City of the Seven Hills*

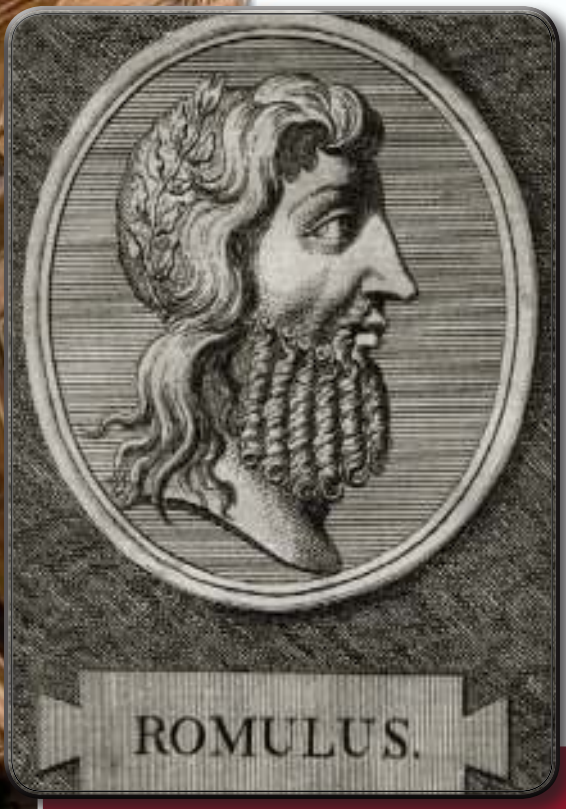
Halfway down the Italian peninsula, on the west coast, is a small river called the Tiber. The coastal plain south of the river was known as Latium in ancient times, after the people who lived there—the Latins. These people were shepherds and farmers.

In the hill country to the west lived the Sabines, distant kinsmen of the Latins. They had moved into the peninsula from central

***Bridge over the Tiber River.*** **Anik Messier/Flickr/Getty Images**

Europe before 1000 BC and had vanquished the original inhabitants. The people conquered by the Sabines had probably begun to move from Africa about 10,000 BC as the Sahara gradually turned to desert.

On the left bank of the Tiber River rise seven low hills. At this point the river is shallow and easy to cross. Latin merchants built a village on one of the hills—called the Palatine—to trade with the wealthy Etruscans, who lived north of the river. Settlements were later built on the other hills also. The towns on the seven hills finally joined to make one city, Rome.




***Romulus.*** **Hulton Archive/Getty Images**

## THE KINGS OF EARLY ROME

The early Romans kept no written records. Their history is so mixed with fables and myths that historians have difficulty distinguishing truth from fiction. Only two existing works give the continuous early history of Rome. Both works were written long after the events they depict, and neither

is complete. They are the histories of Livy and the *Roman Antiquities* of Dionysius of Halicarnassus. These men used inaccurate literary works for their information about early Rome.

The old legends say that Romulus founded the city in 753 BC when the settlements on the seven hills were united. This date is probably too late for the actual founding of the city. Romulus was a mythical person, but there is some evidence that the kings who are said to have followed him actually existed.

Legend says that Numa Pompilius succeeded Romulus. He is described as a wise and pious ruler. One of his accomplishments is supposed to have been the adding of two months to the 10-month calendar.

Under his successor, Tullus Hostilus, the Romans conquered Alba Longa, the religious center of the Latin people. There is a legend that Tullus was killed by lightning when he was "meddling" with the weather. During the reign of Ancus Martius, the next king, a number of troublesome Latin cities were conquered, and their inhabitants were brought to Rome. Ancus Martius is said to have built Rome's seaport Ostia at the mouth of the Tiber.

# Romulus and Remus

**The legendary founders of the city of Rome were Romulus and Remus. They were said to be the twin sons of Mars, the god of war, and Rhea Silvia, the daughter of Numitor, king of Alba Longa. Rhea had been forced to become a vestal virgin by her uncle, Amulius, who had deposed Numitor. When Rhea gave birth, Amulius imprisoned Rhea Silvia and ordered servants to cast the infants adrift on the Tiber River. The Tiber was in flood, and the high waters safely**

*In Roman legend, Romulus and Remus, twin sons of the god Mars, were rescued by a she-wolf and a woodpecker. They went on to found the city of Rome.* Shutterstock.com

carried the twins' basket to the riverbank, where they were deposited under a fig tree. There a she-wolf and a woodpecker, animals sacred to Mars, found the boys. The animals nursed, fed, and cared for them until they were found by Faustulus, the king's herdsman. He and his wife reared the twins.

When Romulus and Remus grew to manhood, they killed Amulius and restored Numitor as king. The twins then determined to build a city on the Tiber. Remus selected Aventine Hill as the site, but Romulus insisted on Palatine Hill. Remus was killed in the quarrel that followed, and Romulus was declared king.

To hasten the city's growth, Romulus made Rome a refuge for outcasts and fugitives. Because there were no women, he persuaded the Romans to lure the neighboring Sabines to a festival and to kidnap the women. A war was averted when the women said they would stay with the Romans. After about 40 years of rule, Romulus was miraculously taken to Mount Olympus to become a god and to dwell with his father. The ancient Romans then worshiped Romulus under the name of Quirinus.

## THE ETRUSCAN CONQUEST

Shortly before 600 BC, Rome was conquered by several Etruscan princes from across the Tiber River. Dating from this period of time information about Roman history is

**Tarquinius the Proud Founding the Temple of Jupiter on Capitol Hill, *Perino del Vaga*. The Bridgeman Art Library/Getty Images**

slightly more reliable, but it is still mixed with myth and legend.

Tarquinius Priscus, the first of the Etruscan kings, drained the city's marshes. He improved the Forum, which was the commercial and political center of the town. He also founded a temple to Jupiter and carried on many wars with neighboring people. Under Servius Tullius, the second Etruscan

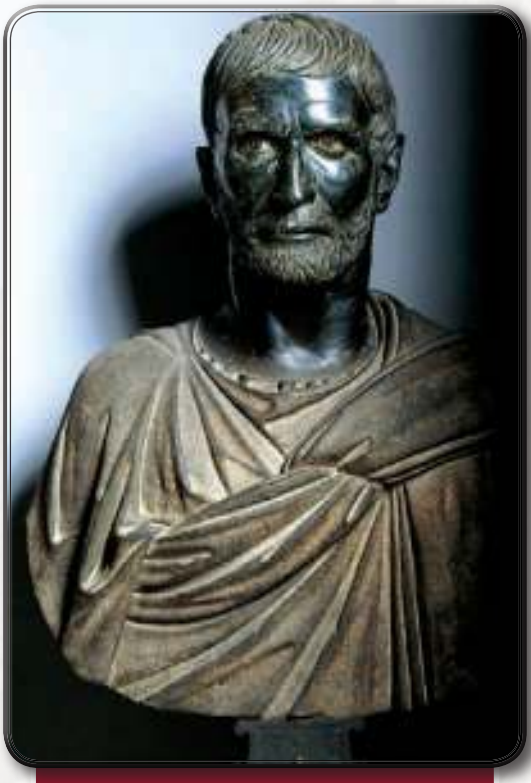
king, a treaty was made with the Latin cities which acknowledged Rome as the head of all Latium. Early historians said that Servius Tullius enlarged the city and built a wall around all seven hills. The last of the kings of Rome, Tarquinius Superbus (Tarquin the Proud), was a tyrant.

Under the rule of the Etruscans Rome grew in importance and power. Great temples and impressive public works were constructed. The most notable of these public works is the huge sewer *Cloaca Maxima*, which is still in use. Trade prospered, and by the end of the 6th century BC Rome had become the largest and richest city in Italy.

***The* Cloaca Maxima*, a sewer built in Rome during the time of Etruscan rule, is still in use.* Stephen Alvarez/ National Geographic Image Collection/Getty Images**

# CHAPTER 2
## The Early Republic

In spite of Rome's progress and development, the old Latin aristocracy resented the Etruscan kings. According to tradition, Junius Brutus led a rebellion of the aristocracy against Tarquinius Superbus in about 509 BC. The Etruscans were expelled from the city, and Rome became a republic. Soon afterward the Etruscans were driven from the rest of Latium as well.



***Junius Brutus.*** **G. Nimatallah/ De Agostini Picture Library/ Getty Images**

From that time the title of king was hateful to the Roman people. Even the most despotic rulers in the later days of the Roman Empire did not dare to call themselves kings.

### Period of Conquest

The young republic now set out on its long career of almost constant warfare and conquest. At the time it did not seem destined to rule the Western world.

It was only a tiny city-state, much like the city-states that were flourishing at the same time in Greece. Its area was less than 400 square miles (1,000 square kilometers), and its population was perhaps 150,000.

The government was in the hands of the wealthy and aristocratic citizens, called the patricians. They were supposed to be descendants of the three original tribes of Rome. The common citizens were called the plebs or plebeians. At first they had little to do with governing. Bit by bit, however, they tore down the barrier that separated the two orders. The internal history of the republic for the next three centuries is largely the story of how the plebeians wrested reform after reform from the patricians.

In the early days of the republic, the ruling power was divided between two patrician magistrates, elected for one year. These were called consuls. They were chosen by an assembly called the *comitia centuriata*. It was made up of divisions apportioned in such a way that votes of the patricians counted for much more than those of the far more numerous plebeians. The Senate, the most important political body, consisted of 300 men chosen by the consuls from the patricians. Thus shut out from office and political power, the

plebeians were grievously oppressed by their wealthy fellow citizens. True, they were protected from the worst dangers of arbitrary power by the *lex Valeria* (Valerian law) passed in 509 BC. This law provided that whenever the life or rights of any citizen were at stake, he could appeal from the magistrates to the assembly of the people. However, they suffered from unjust debt laws and from unfair distribution of territory won by conquest.

## RISE OF THE PLEBEIANS

To right their wrongs the plebeians went on what today would be called a general strike. In 494 BC they marched out of Rome in a body and threatened to make a new city. This strike terrified the patricians. They agreed to cancel all debts and to release people who were in prison for debt. Furthermore, the plebeians were granted the right to be represented by new officials, called tribunes. The tribunes had the right to veto the act of any magistrate which was unjust to any citizen.

From this beginning the plebeians went on to gain other rights. They soon won recognition for an assembly of their own, the *concilium plebis*. They forced the appointment of commissions of ten men, called decemvirs,

to put state laws into writing and to have them engraved on 12 bronze tablets. This took place in 450 BC. They won the right to marry patricians by the *lex Canuleia* in 445 BC. They won appointment or election to public offices, one after another. The chief of these, which were established to relieve the consuls of the growing burdens of administration, were those of quaestors, or treasurers; censors, who kept the lists of the citizens, assessed taxes, and supervised public morals; and praetors, or judges.

The struggle was a long one, and it was not until 367 BC that it was decided one of the two consuls should be a plebeian. In 350 BC the plebeians were admitted to the dictatorship. This was an extraordinary magistracy whereby supreme power at critical times was given to one man.

Admission to these offices carried with it admission to the Senate, because vacancies were filled from those who had last been elected to public office. The Roman Senate of the republican period has been called the most distinguished and important political body that has ever existed in the world. Its members were appointed for life, and executives were bound to submit to it all important measures. In theory it was a purely advisory body. Because its members were former magistrates,

however, any advice it gave was almost certain to be accepted. No magistrate would dare challenge such a body unless he was prepared to back up his act by force of arms.

The growing power of the plebs was marked by the gradual rise of a new voting body, the *comitia tributa*, in which one man's vote counted as much as another's. This developed from the plebeian assembly (*concilium plebis*, which still continued to meet) by allowing patricians also to participate. After the passage of a law (*lex Hortensia*) in 287 BC making the acts of the plebeian assembly binding on all the people, these two bodies made most of the laws.

## Struggles Between Rich and Poor

Side by side with the struggle for political power was the economic struggle between rich and poor. The wealthy landowners continued to increase their estates, taking the best of the lands and increasing their herds until they monopolized the public pasture. They continued the practice of lending money at ruinous interest to the small proprietors, reducing them to slavery when they could not pay. Moreover, the population of Rome was

increasing too fast, and the soil was becoming poorer because of the primitive farming methods. The burden of constant warfare fell most heavily on the plebeians, who had to leave their little farms to fight the state's battles. Gradually, however, reforms were forced through, chief of which were the Licinian laws of 367 BC. These again revised the debt laws, limited holdings to 300 acres (121 hectares), and compelled the large landowners to employ a certain proportion of free laborers.

## Conquest of Italy

While these important changes were taking place at home, the little city-state had been gradually extending its power. Compelled at first to fight for its very existence against powerful neighbors, Rome gradually fought its way to the leadership of the Italian peoples. This paved the way that was to lead to the conquest of the world.

### War with the Etruscans and Gauls

The most powerful of its early foes had been the Etruscans. With their greater numbers and superior civilization, the Etruscans might have defeated Rome. Their fleet, however,

was destroyed in a war with the Greek city of Syracuse in Italy (474 BC). They also suffered constant pressure of the Gauls from the north who swarmed into the Po Valley toward the end of the 5th century and laid waste the Etruscan cities of the north. Thus aided, the Romans had been able (396 BC) to take, after a 10 years' siege, the Etruscan stronghold of Veii, which was eight miles (13 kilometers) from Rome.

In its conflicts with this foe and with neighboring Italic tribes (chiefly the Aequians and Volscians), Rome

***In 500 BC Italy was inhabited by a number of different peoples. Through a series of wars, the Romans conquered all of Italy by 270 BC.*** **Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc.**

was supported by the other Latin cities to the south. They were united under the name of the Latin League and had made a treaty with Rome for mutual defense. The victorious progress of Rome received a temporary setback in 390 BC when wandering Gauls advanced through the heart of Etruria. They ravaged the land as they went and captured and sacked Rome. Legend tells how the garrison on the Capitol Hill was aroused in the nick of time by the cackling of the sacred geese and repulsed the storming party. After a fruitless siege the Gauls accepted a heavy ransom and returned to the valley of the Po.

Although Rome had been burned, the Etruscans had suffered far worse in the invasion and were so weakened that Rome was able to seize their southern possessions. In another century Rome conquered their whole territory.

### *Defeat of the Latins and Samnites*

Meanwhile the Latin League had become restive under the growing power and arrogance of their ally and attempted to break away from its control. Rome won the two years' war that followed (340–338 BC). Some

## The Latin League

**The alliance that modern scholars call the Latin League was formed in opposition to Etruscan Rome at the end of the 6th century BC. By that time the Etruscan rulers of Rome had established control over the Latin communities south of the Tiber River. With the fall of the Etruscan monarchy, the villages of Latium formed their league. Rome fought the Latin cities at the battle of Lake Regillus (499 or 496), and in 493 the Romans made a treaty with the Latins on an equal basis for mutual defense. As Rome gained territory, the political power of the league diminished. The treaty was renewed in 358 with changes that secured Rome's leadership. This led to an outbreak of war from which Rome emerged victorious in 338, when the Latin League was dissolved.**

towns were reduced to vassalage, others were given full Roman citizenship, and others partial citizenship (the "Latin right").

Another strong foe in central Italy still remained to be reckoned with, the Samnites, who were also of Italic stock. The first conflict with this warlike people (343–341 BC) had been interrupted by the Latin revolt. The truce then made was broken a

few years later (326 BC). A desperate struggle continued, with interruptions, until the decisive battle of Sentinum (295 BC) made Rome supreme over all central and northern Italy.

## The Pyrrhic War

Only southern Italy, occupied by a disunited group of Greek city-states, remained independent. Its fate was not long delayed. Alarmed at the spread of Roman power, the Greek cities appealed to Pyrrhus, king of Epirus in Greece. He inflicted two telling defeats on the Roman army and then crossed to Sicily to aid the Greek cities there to throw off the yoke of Carthage. Encouraged by the arrival of a Carthaginian fleet, Rome renewed the struggle, and in 275 BC defeated Pyrrhus in the battle of Beneventum. One by one the Greek cities were taken, and Rome was ruler of all Italy.

***Pyrrhus.*** **A. Dagli Orti/De Agostini Picture Library/ Getty Images**

## CONSOLIDATING ROMAN GAINS

The Roman genius was great. Nowhere was its skill shown better than in the development of the system that gradually welded the lands conquered by the Romans into a single nation, contented and unified. Rome could have exploited the conquered cities of Italy for its own interests.

Instead it granted many of them the privileges of Roman citizenship, in full or in part, as it had done for the Latin cities. Most of these people were given the status of allies. They had self-government and the right to trade and intermarry in Rome. They did not, however, have the right to vote.

Furthermore, all Italy was dotted with colonies of Roman citizens. Most of the colonists retained their full civic rights. Much territory—nearly one sixth of all Italy—was annexed and distributed among these Roman citizens. Thus a common interest in the welfare of Rome spread throughout the Italian peninsula.

# CHAPTER 3
## World Domination

Two centuries of warfare had turned Rome into a nation of soldiers. With Italy subdued, Rome used its military might to conquer the entire Mediterranean basin and to expand its rule into continental Europe. Under Pompey the Great and Julius Caesar, Rome's influence was extended over Syria, Jerusalem, Cyprus, and Gaul.

***Pompey was first called Magnus (the Great) by his troops in about 82 BC.*** **Hulton Archive/Getty Images**

### *The Punic Wars*

Rome's only remaining rival in the western Mediterranean was the Phoenician colony of Carthage. Carthage was the chief sea power, just as Rome was the chief land power. Carthaginian warships made the Mediterranean a closed sea. The Carthaginians sank the trading vessels of any other city that dared to bid for a share of the rich commerce of this region.

Such lordly and insolent behavior was intolerable to the equally haughty pride of Rome, and a conflict for Mediterranean supremacy—the Punic Wars—began in 264 BC.

## FIRST PUNIC WAR

The First Punic War was brought on by a clash between Roman and Carthaginian forces over the city of Messina, Sicily. A group of mercenary soldiers had established themselves in the city. When attacked by forces led by Hiero II of Syracuse, they appealed to both Rome and Carthage for help. Both responded and began fighting with each other.

By gaining mastery of the sea, Rome was able to defeat Carthage. Final victory came on March 10, 241, in a naval battle off the west coast of Sicily. Carthage was forced to yield Sicily and other islands to Rome. In the years after the war it became evident to Carthage that Rome was determined to control the Mediterranean. To avoid complete defeat, the Carthaginian general Hamilcar Barca took an army to Spain in 237 to open new markets and to create a new base of operations. His militarization of Spain was continued by his sons Hasdrubal and Hannibal and his son-in-law Hasdrubal. Hannibal's conquest of the

Roman town of Sagunto in Spain led to a new declaration of war by Rome.

## Second Punic War

The second war between Rome and Carthage was one of the great military conflicts of the ancient world. Hannibal led his forces from Spain through the Alps to Italy, arriving near the Po River in 218. He thoroughly defeated a

***Hannibal and his forces triumphed over Rome's large army at Cannae in 216 BC.*** **Time & Life Pictures/Getty Images**

Roman force of more than 15,000 in 217, but he did not follow up his victory. The Roman general Quintus Fabius Maximus followed Hannibal but did not engage him—thus preventing him from establishing a permanent base of operations.

In 216 Rome sent a large army to meet Hannibal. The opposing forces met at Cannae, where Hannibal completely routed the Roman armies. Hannibal again did not follow up his victory with a direct attack on Rome. He remained in Italy, trying to bring Rome's allies to his side.

By 207 Hasdrubal had gone to Spain and returned to Italy with fresh armies. Rome was soon threatened from the north and south. The two Carthaginian forces, however, did not join together. The combined Roman armies defeated Hasdrubal, and Hannibal was left to roam southern Italy until ordered back to Africa in 203. Apart from Italy there was fighting in Sicily and Spain. By 210 all of Sicily was in Roman hands. That same year Scipio Africanus, then known as Publius Cornelius Scipio, was put in command of Roman forces in Spain. He failed to prevent Hasdrubal from taking an army to Italy in 208, but he ended Carthaginian power in Spain by a great victory at Ilipa, near modern Seville, in 206.

After a visit to Rome in 205, Scipio assembled an army and sailed for North Africa in 204. He won campaigns in 204 and 203 against Carthage and its allies. In 202 Hannibal was put in command of Carthaginian forces. He met Scipio's better-trained and disciplined army near Zama. Scipio won and earned the nickname Africanus by which he has been known ever since.

***Scipio Africanus.*** **Hulton Archive/Getty Images**

Carthage sued for peace. Under Rome's terms Carthage was forced to give Spain and all Mediterranean islands it controlled to Rome. In addition, it was forced to pay a large indemnity and forfeit any independence in foreign policy. This was the effective end of Carthage as a military power.

## Third Punic War

Although powerless militarily, the commercial fortunes of Carthage revived significantly during the next 50 years. It was the envy of Rome's merchant class, aided by friends in the Roman Senate, that brought on the last of the Punic

wars. The determination of some Roman politicians—led by Cato the Censor and his incessant chanting of "Carthage must be destroyed"—produced a seemingly reasonable excuse for war. Carthage resisted aggression by an ally of Rome in 150. A Roman army was sent to Africa. Although Carthage wanted peace, it was forced to fight for survival. A siege of Carthage lasted two years without result. Then in 147 Scipio Aemilianus was put in command of Rome's forces. He attacked the city from the harbor side and—in a relentless house-by-house battle—finally overcame all opposition. Carthage was torn down and its site condemned to lie forever desolate. The territory became a Roman province.

## WINNING WORLD MASTERY

Rome was now well launched on its way to world domination. One conquest led to another. Upper Italy (Gallia Cisalpina), Sicily, Spain, Macedonia, Greece, and Asia Minor were subdued and made Roman provinces. Intoxicated with their sudden rise to power, the new generation of statesmen departed from the wise policies of their great predecessors. They fought ruthlessly and ruined the countries they conquered.

Most conquered lands were administered by governors (proconsuls). They ruled like despots and tried to amass in their one year of office wealth for a lifetime. The enormous taxes wrung from the subject peoples defrayed most of the expenses of the Roman state.

They also enriched the greedy collectors (publicans), who purchased the privilege of collecting the taxes. Wealth poured into Rome from all over the world, and the ancient simplicity of Roman life gave way to luxury and pomp. Morals were undermined, and vice and corruption flourished.

The suddenly enriched officeholders acquired estates and bought up the little farms of the peasants. The peasants were poor and could not compete with the hordes of slaves who worked the great plantations. The streets of the capital were flooded with poverty-stricken people—ruined farmers, discharged soldiers, and idlers from all Italy. These people lived on state and private charity as well as on bribes that were given by office seekers.

Between the aristocracy of birth and wealth and the vast moneyless mob there was bitter hostility. War of class against class was bound to come. A few patriotic statesmen tried in vain to avert the dreadful climax. The Gracchi brothers, grandsons of the great

Scipio Africanus who defeated Hannibal at Zama, came forward as champions of the people. They proposed laws to redistribute the public lands and to limit the powers of the corrupt and selfish Senate. Both men fell victims to their foes, Tiberius in 133 BC and Gaius 12 years later.

## A CENTURY OF DISORDER

The death of Tiberius marked the beginning of a century of revolution and civil war. First of the popular military chiefs was Marius. He had become a national hero by capturing Jugurtha, leader of an insurrection in Africa, and almost destroying (102–101 BC) a horde of German barbarians (the Cimbri and Teutones) who had defeated four Roman armies. In the year 90 BC the Italian allies, who had long demanded full Roman citizenship, rose in revolt (the Social War). The struggle lasted two years and ended in the bestowal of citizenship.

Rivalry between Marius and Sulla, an adherent of the senatorial party, for command in a war against Mithradates in Asia Minor led Sulla to march with his troops on Rome. For the first time Rome was invaded by a Roman army. As soon as Sulla and his legions were

safely out of the way in Asia, Marius in turn seized Rome with his army and massacred many of the senatorial leaders. On his victorious return in 82 BC, Sulla took a fearful revenge, slaughtering more than 5,000 of the people's leaders and confiscating their goods. As "perpetual dictator" (81–79 BC) he passed laws transferring supreme power from the people to the Senate. The aristocrats, however, were too corrupt and feeble to hold power.

## Pompey, Caesar, and Crassus

The infighting and corruption within the governing elite threatened Rome's supremacy in the Mediterranean—and the very structure of Roman power. In these stormy years two great statesmen emerged: Pompey and Julius Caesar.

Pompey had distinguished himself as a military leader in the civil war between Marius and Sulla, siding with Sulla and winning brilliant victories in Africa and Sicily. In 70 he was elected one of Rome's two consuls. The other consul was his rival Marcus Crassus. At the end of the consulship Pompey was given supreme command in the Mediterranean, and he spent the 60s scoring military victories that built his power and prestige. During this period Crassus built a political following

at Rome, largely by using his great wealth to assist indebted senators.

Meanwhile, Caesar had begun his rise. He was a patrician by birth. Yet despite this noble heritage, his family sided with the revolutionaries against the nobility. Caesar began to climb the Roman political ladder with his election to the position of quaestor in 69 or 68. Eventually, in 59, he was elected consul. To bolster his political standing he formed a political alliance with Pompey and Crassus. This alliance is often called the First Triumvirate.

After a year as consul, Caesar was sent to govern a Roman province in Gaul, the region that is now France. From this province he set out to conquer the rest of Gaul, which he accomplished between 58 and 50. This campaign gave Caesar the opportunity to show his great qualities as a leader, an organizer, and a general.

## The Civil War

Meanwhile, back in Rome, the triumvirate had begun to collapse. Crassus was killed in

*Julius Caesar.* **Hulton Archive/Getty Images**

battle in Asia Minor in 53, leaving Pompey as sole consul. Pompey, who had grown wary of Caesar's increasing power, sided with Caesar's enemies in the Senate. The Senate ordered Caesar to disband his army but did not demand that Pompey give up his command simultaneously.

The river Rubicon marked the boundary between Italy and Caesar's province in Gaul. Crossing it with an army meant declaring war on Rome. When Caesar reached the river on Jan. 10, 49 BC, he plunged his horse into its water and exclaimed, "*Alea jacta est*" ("The die is cast"). The expression "crossing the Rubicon" is still used to describe an irreversible decision.

Pompey fled across the sea to Greece. Caesar seized the treasury in Rome and set up a temporary government, with himself as dictator. Four years of civil war followed.

After a successful campaign in Spain, Caesar sailed for Greece and decisively defeated Pompey at Pharsalus (48 BC). Pompey fled to Egypt and was murdered there before Caesar could catch up with him. Caesar placed Cleopatra on Egypt's throne

**Caesar Crossing the Rubicon, *Jean Fouquet. As he crossed the Rubicon River to declare war on Rome, Caesar is said to have declared,* "Alea jacta est" *("The die is cast").* The Bridgeman Art Library/Getty Images**

and remained with her through the winter. Then he went to Asia Minor. It was after an easy victory there, in Pontus, that he sent his famous message to the Senate, "*Veni, vidi, vici*" ("I came, I saw, I conquered").

In the autumn of 47 BC, Caesar was back in Rome. He found that his opponents had gone to Africa to raise forces against him. Caesar crossed over to Africa in 46 BC and crushed them. Soon after he went again to Spain to destroy the last of the Pompeian forces, led by Pompey's sons. He was then master of the Greco-Roman world.

## The Dictatorship and Assassination of Caesar

In 44 BC Caesar was powerful enough to have himself made dictator for life. He planned to use his power to put through many far-reaching and much-needed reforms. Deeming himself a person of high destiny, he lived with pomp and ceremony. He offended the republicans—those who opposed the establishment of a monarchy—by having his statue set up alongside the statues of the early kings of Rome.

Alarmed by Caesar's one-man rule, 60 senators joined in a conspiracy to assassinate him at a meeting of the Senate. They carried

**The Death of Caesar,** ***Vincenzo Camuccini. Caesar's power so alarmed the Senate that 60 of its members schemed to assassinate him in 44 BC.*** **The Bridgeman Art Library/Getty Images**

out their plan in 44 BC. The murder of Caesar deprived Rome of perhaps its greatest statesman and soldier. Along with his military victories, Caesar's social and political reforms were notable. He instituted the Julian calendar, which became the basis for the calendar now used in most parts of the world. Shortly before his death, Caesar drew up a blueprint

## CAESAR AND THE IDES OF MARCH

**On the day that was to be his last, Caesar disregarded the warning of his wife, Calpurnia, and went to the Senate chamber. The date was March 15, called the Ides of March on the Roman calendar, in 44 BC. As Caesar entered, he was surrounded by the conspirators. In the group was his friend Marcus Junius Brutus, a young republican. At a signal the conspirators drew their daggers and attacked. At first Caesar tried to defend himself. But when he saw Brutus with a dagger he gave up the struggle, saying, "*Et tu, Brute?*" ("You too, Brutus?"). He fell dead at the foot of Pompey's statue.**

for the constitutions of the *municipia*, units of local self-government for Roman citizens. He also increased the size of the Senate and made its composition more representative of the Roman population.

## THE RISE OF OCTAVIAN

Caesar's death led to a power struggle in Rome. His old soldiers rallied to Octavian,

**Antony and Cleopatra, *G. Lerouisse.* The Bridgeman Art Library/Getty Images**

Caesar's son by adoption and now his heir. The youth also won the support of the Senate. Mark Antony and Lepidus, his chief rivals, were forced to come to terms with him. Together they formed the Second Triumvirate. At Philippi, in 42 BC, they defeated the republican army, headed by Brutus and Cassius. Lepidus was later stripped of his power. Antony and Octavian then divided the Roman world between them, with Octavian supreme in Italy and the West.

Antony took over the eastern provinces but neglected them to spend time at the court of the Egyptian queen, Cleopatra, in Alexandria. Octavian got the Roman Senate to declare war on Egypt and won a decisive victory in the naval battle of Actium in 31 BC. Antony and Cleopatra escaped to Alexandria. The next year Octavian defeated Antony again in Egypt, and Antony and Cleopatra committed suicide. Egypt was annexed to Rome, and Octavian returned to Rome in triumph.

# CHAPTER 4
# The Roman Empire

The battle of Actium made Octavian master of Rome and its provinces. He kept up a show of republican government, with himself as first citizen (*princeps civitatis*). However, historians consider the date 31 BC to mark the end of the Roman Republic and the beginning of the Roman Empire. In 27 BC the Senate conferred on Octavian the title Augustus (the exalted or sacred one), implying he was more than a man but not quite a god. The Empire that began with his reign would endure for 500 years.

## Two Centuries of Peace and Prosperity

With the establishment of the Empire, the century of civil strife, which had also seen almost constant warfare abroad, was followed by two centuries of profound peace broken only by frontier warfare. At home literature and civilization flourished, and in the provinces responsible men held power. More and more the Mediterranean world

***Constantine the Great.*** **The Bridgeman Art Library/Getty Images**

came to resemble one great nation. Paved roads led from one end of Italy to the other and into what are now France and Germany. Fragments of Roman roads still exist even in faraway Britain, aqueducts and bridges in France, and Roman wells in the Egyptian oases of the Sahara.

Roman citizenship was extended to all free men throughout the Empire, and Roman law was administered in every court. Christianity had an opportunity to grow slowly in this peaceful period, in spite of repeated waves of persecution instigated by some emperors. In the 4th century, during the reign of Constantine the Great, Christianity became the official faith of the Roman Empire and began to spread throughout the Western world.

The "Roman peace" (*Pax Romana*) extended over the civilized world. Even the most remote lands were ransacked to supply the wealthy Roman citizens with luxuries and delicacies. Art and letters were prized and fostered. In this era, however, there were signs that the national character was decaying.

The fundamental seriousness (*gravitas*) which had characterized the conduct of ancient Romans was gone. The old reverence

for the family, the state, and the gods was gone as well. Prosperity had brought corruption with it. In place of Brutus offering up his sons on the altar of duty to the state, there was Nero murdering his mother and his wife at the prompting of Poppaea.

The passion for a life of luxurious ease existed in all classes. The rich amused themselves by giving splendid feasts. The poor had their *panem et circenses*—that is, free bread and free shows. Slave labor had degraded the once sturdy peasantry to the status of serfs or beggars. The middle class, which once had been the backbone of the nation, had almost disappeared. In Roman society there were only the rich and the very poor.

## The Imperial History of Rome

Augustus was followed by his stepson Tiberius (AD 14–37), who was a capable but unpopular ruler. Then came the mad Caligula (37–41), whose life was ended by his own officers after he had reigned for only four years. Although Claudius (41–54) was not a strong ruler, his reign left its mark on the history of the Empire, for his generals conquered

the southern part of Britain. The infamous Nero (54–68) was the last ruler of the line descended from Julius Caesar. Nero alienated many Romans by neglecting his duties in favor of indulging his artistic pretensions and his obsession with the mystery religions of Greece and the Middle East.

***Nero was so interested in artistic pursuits and the religions of Greece and the Middle East that he tended to neglect his duties as ruler of Rome.*** **Henry Guttmann/Hulton Archive/Getty Images**

For two years after Nero's death there were struggles for the throne between rival military commanders, and civil war was threatened. With the triumph of Vespasian (69–79), however, the government stabilized. Vespasian's son Domitian, an insane tyrant, conquered all Britain. He was murdered for his cruelties.

Domitian was followed by a line of five great emperors—perhaps the wisest and noblest line of rulers the world has ever seen. Nerva's brief reign (96–98) was followed by that of the great conquering emperor Trajan (98–117), under whom the Empire reached its greatest extent. The capable Hadrian (117–138) consolidated and improved the Empire's organization and fortified the frontiers.

# Emperor Hadrian

Publius Aelius Hadrianus, called Hadrian, was Roman emperor from 117 until 138. He regarded his 20-year reign as a golden age of peace and prosperity, comparable to that of his great predecessor Augustus more than 100 years earlier. Monuments to Hadrian's reign are the Tivoli villa near Rome; Castel Sant'Angelo, adjacent to Vatican City, built as a mausoleum for himself; the Pantheon, a temple to the gods, in Rome; and Hadrian's Wall in the north of England.

Hadrian was born in Italica, Spain (near modern Seville), on January 24, 76, to a Roman family. He was a relative of the emperor Trajan, who ruled from 98 to 117. Hadrian was probably educated in Rome. Through the emperor's good will he was rapidly promoted in military and political posts. While on a military campaign with Trajan in the Middle East, the emperor adopted him—a sure sign Hadrian was destined to succeed him. Two days later, on August 11, 117, it was learned that Trajan had died. The army immediately proclaimed Hadrian emperor.

Hadrian was a man of culture, sensitivity, and religious devotion. His artistic temperament manifested itself in his poetry, his architectural designs, his very style of life. The most notable feature of his reign was his traveling around the Empire. For 12 of his 20 years he was absent from Rome, mostly in the eastern provinces and in North Africa. He

**especially loved Athens and its culture. He visited it three times, revised its constitution, and brought to completion the vast temple of Olympian Zeus, which was begun 500 years earlier. Hadrian died in Baiae, a seaside resort, on July 10, 138.**

Parts of the great wall he built across northern Britain still stand. Hadrian was followed by Antoninus Pius (138–161) and Marcus Aurelius (161–180).

## Decline and Division

From 180 to 284, the Senate recognized 27 men as emperors. Supported by the Roman legions, many others laid claim to the title. The succession of short terms was finally stopped by Diocletian (284–305), who abolished the last of the republican liberties. The Senate was now no more than the city council of Rome. Diocletian also took the first step toward dividing the Empire: he ruled the East and turned over the rule of the West to an associate.

The decline of Rome was complete when Constantine moved his capital to the Greek city of Byzantium on the Black Sea in 330 and renamed it Constantinople in his own

honor (the city is now Istanbul, Turkey). The transfer of the capital meant a real division of the Empire. As the long history of the Byzantine (or Eastern Roman) Empire began, the old Roman Empire fell into weakness and decline. Gradually, the barbarians came down from northern Europe to invade the Empire.

## FALL OF THE WESTERN ROMAN EMPIRE

The first of the barbarians to sack Rome were the Visigoths, or West Goths. In a battle fought near the city of Adrianople in 378, the Visigoths defeated and murdered the Roman emperor Valens. For a time they lived peaceably on Roman territory. On the death of Emperor Theodosius in 395, they rose in rebellion under their ambitious young king Alaric and overran a large part of the Eastern Empire. Beginning in 401 the Visigoths repeatedly invaded Italy. Rome itself fell into their hands in 410.

***Hadrian's Wall, built to defend against barbarian invasions, still stands strong in parts of northern Britain.*** **Walter Bibikow/Taxi/Getty Images**

Another of the barbarian groups that came from the north was the Vandals. In 429 the Vandal king Genseric led his people (80,000 persons, including 15,000 warriors) to North Africa. In 439 Genseric conquered Carthage, the leading Roman city in the region, and established an independent Vandal kingdom. In 455 Genseric sailed northward and captured Rome.

The Huns also were a chronic irritant to both the Western and Eastern empires. Originating in Mongolia, they were fierce warriors who inspired great fear throughout Europe. In 450 the Huns, led by Attila, invaded the West—first Gaul and then Italy.

The last of the Western Roman emperors, Romulus Augustulus, was deposed by the barbarian leader Odoacer in 476. The Roman Empire was at an end, and the barbarian kingdoms of the Middle Ages took its place. The Byzantine Empire, however, lasted another 1,000 years.

***Attila and the Huns, already feared throughout Europe, invaded Gaul and then Italy in 450.*** **Kean Collection/Archive Photos/Getty Images**

# CHAPTER 5
# Achievements of the Ancient Romans

The overarching achievement of ancient Rome was its reorganization of world politics and economics in the form of the Roman Empire. Beyond their imperial supremacy, however, the ancient Romans are also remembered for their intellectual and cultural contributions. They were masters of architecture and engineering and also produced enduring works of literature and art.

## Architecture

Under Roman rule, Europe and the Mediterranean bloomed with trading cities 10 times the size of their predecessors with public amenities previously unheard of: basilicas (law courts), theaters, amphitheaters (arenas), circuses (racecourses for chariots), and public baths. And these were now large permanent masonry buildings as were the habitations, tall apartment houses covering whole city blocks, or *insulae*.

***Public baths and other impressive masonry buildings became common in cities under Roman rule.*** **Matt Cardy/Getty Images**

This architectural revolution brought about by the Romans required two innovations: the invention of a new building method—concrete vaulting—and the organization of labor and capital on a large scale so that huge projects could be executed quickly after the plans of a single master architect.

## Pagan Rome

Roman concrete was a fluid mixture of lime and small stones poured into the hollow centers of walls faced with brick or stone and over curved wooden molds, or forms, to span spaces as vaults. The Mediterranean is an active volcanic region, and a spongy, light,

***The terrace walls and foundations of Fortuna Primigenia in Palestrina, located in central Italy, were constructed with Roman pozzolana, a light volcanic stone used to create a strong concrete.*** **Marka/SuperStock**

tightly adhering stone called pozzolana was used to produce a concrete that was both light and extremely strong.

The Romans had developed pozzolana concrete in about 100 BC but at first used it only for terrace walls and foundations, as, for example, at the Temple of Fortuna Primigenia

***The Domus Aurea was a vast maze of concrete rooms.*** **The Bridgeman Art Library/Getty Images**

at Palestrina, erected in about 80 BC. It apparently was the notorious emperor Nero who first used the material on a grand scale to rebuild a region of the city of Rome around his palace, the expansive Domus Aurea (Golden House), after the great fire of AD 64. Here broad streets, blocks of masonry apartment houses, and continuous colonnaded porticoes were erected according to a single plan and partially at state expense. The Domus Aurea itself was a labyrinth of concrete vaulted rooms, many in complex geometric forms.

The architect Severus seems to have been in charge of this great project. Emperors and emperors' architects succeeding Nero and Severus continued and expanded their work of rebuilding and regularizing Rome. Vespasian (emperor AD 63–79) began the Colosseum, Rome's largest and most important amphitheater, with seating for about 50,000 spectators. Domitian (81–96) rebuilt the Palatine Hill as a huge palace of vaulted concrete designed by his architect Rabirius. Trajan (97–117) erected the expansive forum that bears his name (designed by his architect Apollodorus) and a huge public bath. Hadrian (117–138)—proud to serve as his own architect—built the Pantheon (a remarkable circular temple) as well as a villa the size of a small city for himself at Tivoli.

Later Caracalla (211–217) and Diocletian (284–305) erected two mammoth baths that bear their names, and Maxentius (306–312) built a huge vaulted basilica, now called the Basilica of Constantine.

The Baths of Caracalla have long been accepted as a summation of Roman architecture. It is a vast building, 360 by 702 feet (110 by 214 meters), set in 50 acres (20 hectares) of gardens. It was one of a dozen establishments of similar size in ancient Rome devoted to recreation and bathing. It included a 60- by 120-foot (18- by 36-meter) swimming pool, hot and cold baths, gymnasia, a library, and game rooms.

The rebuilding of Rome set a pattern copied all over the Empire. Nearby, the ruins of Ostia, Rome's port, reflect that model. Farther away it reappears at Trier in northwestern Germany, at Autun in central France, at Antioch in Syria, and at Timgad and Leptis Magna in North Africa.

## CHRISTIAN ROME

The introduction of Christianity to the Empire in the 4th century changed the focus of Roman architecture. The main challenge to the imperial architects was now the construction of

churches. These churches were large vaulted enclosures of interior space, unlike the temples of the Greeks and the pagan Romans that were mere statue-chambers set in open areas.

The earliest imperial churches in Rome, like the first church of St. Peter's erected by Constantine beginning in 333, were vast barns with wooden roofs supported on lines of columns. They resembled basilicas, which had carried on the Greek style of columnar architecture. Roman concrete vaulted construction was used in certain cases—for example, in the tomb church in Rome of Constantine's daughter, Santa Costanza, of about 350. The religious architecture of the East was more varied. The domed basilica was a typically Byzantine type of church.

## ENGINEERING

Engineering was a great skill of ancient Rome. The most notable achievements of Roman engineers include an extensive road system, bridges, and aqueducts.

### ROADS

The Romans built 50,000 miles (80,000 kilometers) of road, primarily for military

***The Via Appia (Appian Way) was the first major Roman road.*** **Richard Nowitz/National Geographic Image Collection/Getty Images**

reasons. The first of the great Roman roads, the Via Appia (Appian Way), was begun by the censor Appius Claudius Caecus in 312 BC. It originally ran southeast from Rome 162 miles (261 kilometers) to Tarentum (modern Taranto) and was later extended to the Adriatic coast at Brundisium (modern Brindisi). By the beginning of the 2nd century BC, four other great roads radiated

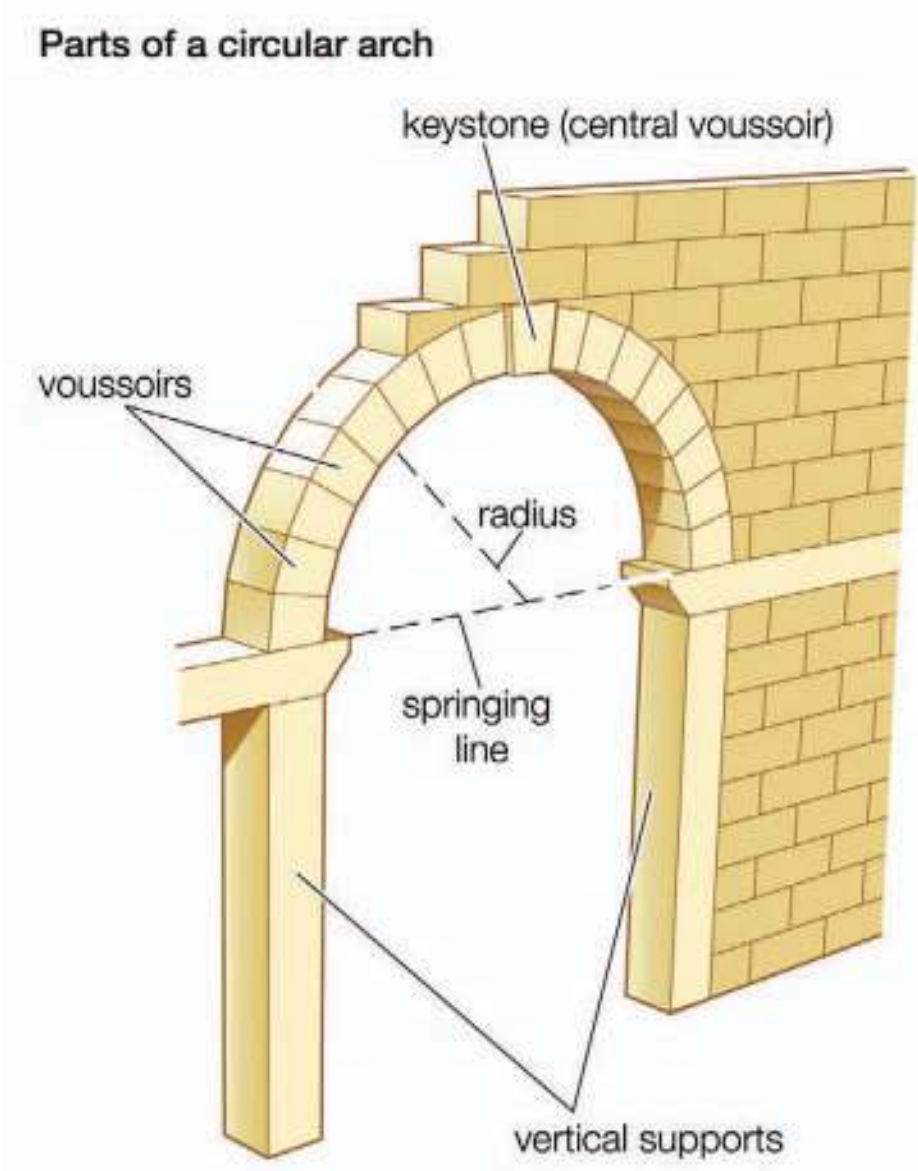
outward from Rome: the Via Aurelia, the Via Flaminia, the Via Valeria, and the Via Latina. Their numerous feeder roads extending far into the Roman provinces led to the proverb "All roads lead to Rome."

Though adapting their technique to materials locally available, Roman engineers followed basically the same principles in building abroad as they had in Italy. In 145 BC they began the Via Egnatia, an extension of the Via Appia beyond the Adriatic into Greece and Asia Minor, where it joined the ancient Persian Royal Road. The Romans also built roads in northern Africa, Gaul, Britain, and Spain.

The Roman road system made possible Roman conquest and administration and later provided highways for the great migrations into the Empire and a means for the spread of Christianity. Despite deterioration from neglect, it continued to serve Europe throughout the Middle Ages, and many fragments of the system survive today.

## Bridges

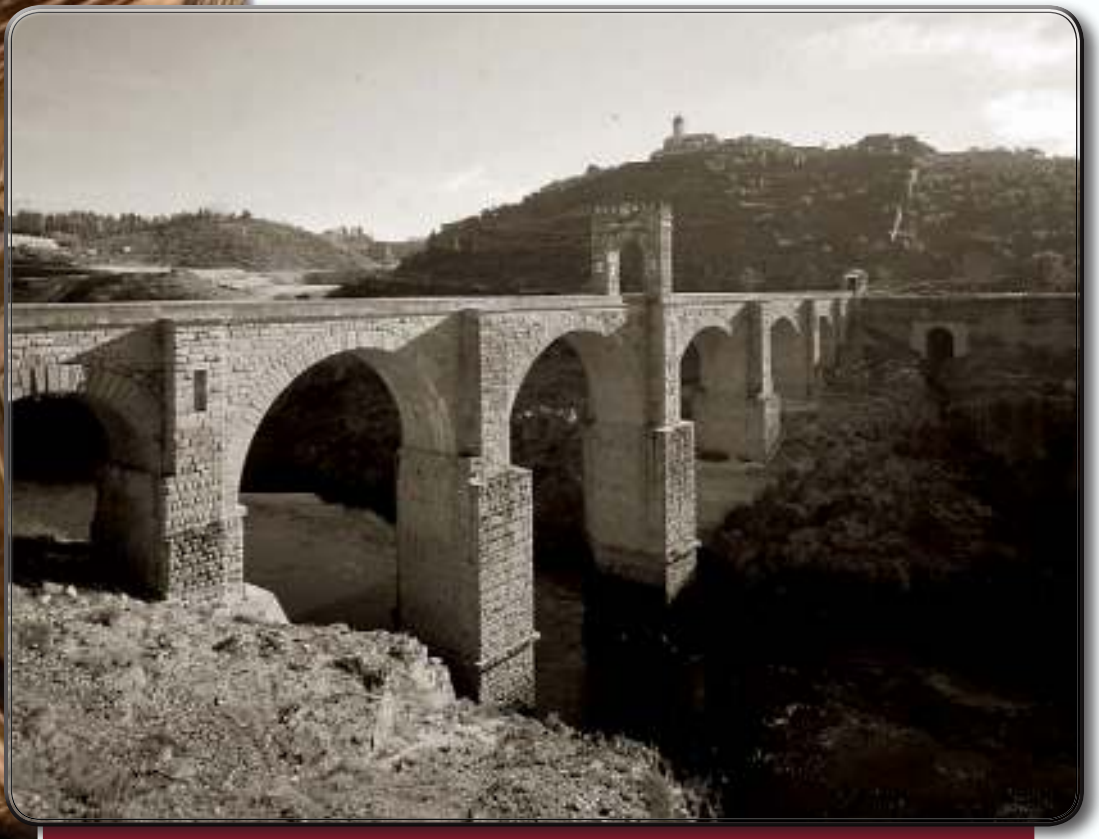
The Romans began organized bridge building to help their military campaigns. Roman bridges are famous for using the circular




***Parts of a circular arch.*** **Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc.**

arch form, which allowed for spans much longer than stone beams and for bridges of more permanence than wood. Where several arches were necessary for longer bridges, strong piers were built.

The Romans built many wooden bridges, but none has survived, and their reputation



***Roman masonry arch bridge, with spans of 98 feet (29 meters), built over the Tagus River at Alcántara, Spain, in the early 2nd century AD.***
**© A.G.E. FOTOSTOCK**

rests on their masonry bridges. One beautiful example is the bridge over the Tagus River at Alcántara, Spain. The arches, each spanning 98 feet (29 meters), feature huge arch stones (voussoirs) weighing up to eight tons each. Typical of the best stone bridges, the voussoirs at Alcántara were so accurately shaped that no mortar was needed in the joints. This bridge has remained standing for nearly 2,000 years.

## AQUEDUCTS

The Romans were the most famous aqueduct builders of ancient times. An aqueduct is a structure that carries water from one place to another. Roman engineers built the main portions of their aqueducts at ground level or underground where possible. The water fed through free-flowing conduits. When it was necessary for the Roman aqueducts to cross valleys or descend to plains, they were often carried on arched bridges. Some bridges were built with two or three tiers of arches to gain the height needed to maintain an even flow.

Water for the city of Rome was supplied by 11 major aqueducts built over a period of more than 500 years. The first one, the Aqua Appia, was built in 312 BC and was 10

miles (16 kilometers) long. The last, the Aqua Alexandrina, was built in about AD 226. The longest was the 58-mile (93-kilometer) Aqua Marcia, built in 144 BC.

Roman engineers built aqueducts in numerous other parts of their Empire, notably France, Spain, and northern Africa. Remains of these aqueducts still exist. A few of them, such as the one at Segovia, Spain, have remained in use. One of the most striking of the old Roman aqueducts is the Pont du Gard in southern France, which the Romans built to a height of 160 feet (49 meters) by stacking three bridges.

## Literature

The language of ancient Rome was Latin. By the 1st century BC it had been developed into a superb literary language, a marvelous instrument for prose and poetry. The Latin of this so-called Golden Age had a stateliness and an artistic finish of style that have never been surpassed in any tongue.

### Beginnings

From its beginnings, Roman literature was based upon Greek models. The most

important early Roman writer was Quintus Ennius. In his *Annales*, a tremendous epic history of the Roman state, Ennius remolded the still clumsy Latin to fit the stately flow of the Greek hexameter verse form. Thus he influenced the whole later history of the language.

The first Latin writer whose works have survived in any considerable body is Titus Maccius Plautus, considered the greatest comic dramatist of Rome. His plots—which he borrowed from the Greek comic poets—have in turn furnished a rich mine for later playwrights, including Shakespeare and Molière.

Though Plautus got the substance of his plots and characters from Greek sources, his manner and spirit were essentially Roman. His great successor Terence deliberately avoided any impulse toward originality. He copied his Greek originals with slavish fidelity. There is nothing Roman about his work except the language. His merit is that he thus brought into Roman literature the Greek standards of elegance, artistic perfection, and moderation.

In addition to these poets, there was Cato the Censor, the first writer of prose history in Rome to employ his native tongue. His

published speeches were greatly admired by Cicero.

## THE GOLDEN AGE

The Golden Age, that great period when Latin literature reached its fullest splendor, covers about a century (80 BC–AD 14). It started with the beginning of Cicero's rise as an orator and ended with the death of the emperor Augustus. Cicero brought Latin prose as an instrument for oratorical, philosophical, literary, and epistolary expression to such a pitch of perfection that the adjective "Ciceronian" become a synonym for "classically perfect."

Different but in no way inferior to the stately sonorous prose of Cicero was the simple, straightforward style of Julius Caesar. Caesar's *The Gallic War*, recording his campaign in Gaul, remains a model of prose narration.

The other chief writers of the Ciceronian period are Sallust, Lucretius, and Catullus. Sallust is placed in the front rank of Roman historians because of his accounts of war and political strife. The philosophical epic *On the*

***Virgil.*** **The Bridgeman Art Library/Getty Images**

*Nature of Things*, written by Lucretius, is perhaps the most original and certainly, next to the *Aeneid*, the greatest poem in Latin. The love poems of Catullus present the joy and pain of the passing moment with the same vividness that is found in the sonnets of Shakespeare.

As the significant authors of the Ciceronian era had perfected Latin prose, so the poets of the Augustan age perfected Latin verse. First of these was Virgil (also spelled Vergil). His great national epic, the *Aeneid*, is one of the supreme masterpieces of the world. In the field of lyric and satiric verse, Horace triumphed as surpassingly as did Virgil with the epic. In his *Satires* and *Epistles* he preserved what is still the most complete and vivid picture of life in the Augustan age. In the metrical form called the elegiac, Ovid was supreme. His greatest work is the romantic *Metamorphoses*.

The Augustan age was the Golden Age of Latin poetry, but it was also the time of the most famous Roman historian. Livy is noted for his splendid rhetoric. He preferred literary effectiveness to historical accuracy. Thus his narrative of Rome from its founding is more like a prose epic, a series of splendid pictures, than history.

# VIRGIL

The greatest of the Roman poets, Publius Vergilius Maro, was not a Roman by birth. His early home was on a farm in the village of Andes, near Mantua. His father was a farmer, prosperous enough to give his son the best education. The young Virgil was sent to school at Cremona and then to Milan. At the age of 17 he went to Rome to study. There he learned rhetoric and philosophy from the best teachers of the day.

Virgil studied the Greek poets. Following Theocritus as a model, he wrote his *Eclogues*. These are pastoral poems describing the beauty of Italian scenes. The *Georgics* was a more serious work on the art of farming and the charms of country life. This established his fame as the foremost poet of his age.

The year after the *Georgics* was published, he began his great epic, the *Aeneid*. He took as his hero the Trojan Aeneas, supposed to be the founder of the Roman nation. He had devoted more than 10 years to this work when, on a visit to Greece, he contracted a fatal fever. On his deathbed he begged to have the *Aeneid* destroyed, saying that it needed three years' work to make it perfect, but Augustus saved it, giving the world one of its epic masterpieces. The poem, published after Virgil's death, exercised a tremendous influence upon Latin and later Christian literature, prose as well as poetry. Thus his influence continued through the Middle Ages and into modern times.

***Juvenal was much admired for his cutting satire, which has been widely emulated and translated by English poets.*** **Roger Viollet/Getty Images**

## THE SILVER AGE

After Ovid and Livy the decline of Roman literature set in rapidly. Still, this period—the Silver Age—produced a number of notable writers. The satirist Juvenal's savage castigations of Roman life have been translated and imitated by many English poets. Martial was a master of the epigram—a short, poetic statement that often has a moral. The tragedies of Seneca were models for early English dramatists. Today they are read as curiosities, but Seneca's philosophical studies can still be enjoyed. In his terse and vivid style, Tacitus provides many illuminating historical pictures. What remains of his *Annals* and *Histories* is a chief source for the events of the first century of the Roman Empire.

Perhaps the most interesting writings in the Silver Age are the letters of Pliny the Younger. The most famous one tells of the

death of his uncle Pliny the Elder in the eruption of Vesuvius that buried the city of Pompeii. As a whole these letters give a racy picture of the time that is also described by Juvenal and Tacitus.

## ART

From early times the Romans felt Greece's artistic influence. In 146 BC, when Greece was conquered by Rome, Greek art became inseparably interwoven with that of Rome. The Romans, however, were not merely imitators, and Roman art was not a decayed form into which Greek art had fallen.

To a large extent the art of the Romans was a development of that of their predecessors in Italy, the Etruscans, who, to be sure, had learned much from the Greeks. Nor were the Romans themselves entirely without originality. Though their artistic forms were, for the most part, borrowed, they expressed in them their own practical dominating spirit.

### SCULPTURE

As they borrowed many elements of their religion from the Greeks, so the Romans copied the statues of Greek gods and

goddesses. Even in one of the few ideal types that they originated, the "Antinoüs," the Greek stamp is unmistakable. In one respect, however, the Roman sculptors did show originality: they produced many vigorous realistic portrait statues. Among those that have come down to us are a beautiful bust of the young Augustus, a splendid full-length statue of the same emperor, and busts of other famous statesmen.

***This statue of Augustus shows the lively, realistic detail often seen in Roman sculpture.*** **Hulton Archive/Getty Images**

## PAINTING

In painting—though here, too, they learned from the Greeks—it seems probable that the Romans developed more originality than in sculpture. Unfortunately, as in the case of the Greeks, the great masterpieces of ancient painting no longer exist. However, we can learn much from the mural paintings found in houses at Pompeii, Herculaneum, and Rome. The pleasing coloring, which in many of the paintings still remains fresh and vivid, and the freedom and vigor of the drawing, would seem to indicate that even from these ancient days Italy was the home of painters of great talent.

# Conclusion

During the later republic and most of the Empire, Rome was the dominant power in the entire Mediterranean basin, most of western Europe, and large areas of northern Africa. The Roman Empire was distinguished not only for its outstanding army—the foundation upon which the whole Empire rested—but also for its accomplishments in intellectual pursuits. Roman law, for example, was a complex body of precedents and comments. Rome's roads were without match in the ancient world, and Roman city planners achieved unprecedented standards of hygiene with their plumbing, sewage disposal, dams, and aqueducts. Roman architecture, though often imitative of Greek styles, was boldly planned and lavishly executed.

Finally, Latin, the language of the Romans, became the medium for a significant body of original works in Western civilization. Cicero's speeches, the histories of Livy and Tacitus, Terence's drama, and above all the poetry of Virgil are all part of the legacy of Rome.

# Glossary

**aristocracy** A governing body or upper class usually made up of a hereditary nobility.

**basilica** An oblong building ending in a semicircular apse (projecting part) used in ancient Rome especially for a court of justice and place of public assembly.

**castigation** Harsh criticism.

**consul** Either of two annually elected chief magistrates of the Roman republic.

**decemvir** A body of 10 magistrates in ancient Rome.

**despotic** Of, relating to, or characteristic of a ruler exercising power tyrannically.

**empire** A major political unit with a large territory or a number of territories or peoples under one ruler with total authority.

**garrison** A military post.

**gravitas** High seriousness (as in a person's bearing or in the treatment of a subject).

**magistrate** A principal official exercising governmental powers over a major political unit (as a nation).

**praetor** An ancient Roman magistrate ranking below a consul and having chiefly judicial functions.

**proconsul** A governor or military commander of an ancient Roman province.

**publican** A collector of taxes or tribute.

**quaestor** One of numerous ancient Roman officials concerned chiefly with financial administration.

**republic** A government having a chief of state who is not a monarch.

**restive** Marked by impatience or uneasiness.

**satire** A literary work using wit, irony, or sarcasm to ridicule human vices and follies.

**sonorous** Imposing or impressive in effect or style.

**triumvirate** A ruling body composed of three officials.

**vassalage** A position of subordination or submission (as to a political power).

**vestal virgin** A virgin consecrated to the Roman goddess Vesta and to the service of watching the sacred fire perpetually kept burning on her altar.

**voussoir** One of the wedge-shaped pieces forming an arch or vault.

# For More Information

The American Classical League (ACL)
Miami University
422 Wells Mill Drive
Oxford, OH 45056
(513) 529-7741
Web site: http://www.aclclassics.org
The ACL is dedicated to promoting the study of classical Greek and Latin language and culture at all academic levels. In addition to sponsoring national exams, the ACL offers several scholarships to students and teachers of classics as well as placement assistance for educators.

American Philological Association (APA)
University of Pennsylvania
220 S. 40th Street, Suite 201E
Philadelphia, PA 19104
(215) 898-4975
Web site: http://apaclassics.org
Through its research, publications, and fellowship opportunities, the APA ensures that the study of ancient Greek and Roman languages and civilizations is kept alive.

Archaeological Institute of America (AIA)
656 Beacon Street, 6th Floor
Boston, MA 02215-2006
(617) 353-9361

Web site: http://www.archaeological.org
The AIA promotes public interest in the cultures and civilizations of the past, supports archaeological research, fosters the sound professional practice of archaeology, advocates the preservation of the world's archaeological heritage, and represents the discipline in the wider world.

Museum of Antiquities
Room 116 College Building
University of Saskatchewan
Saskatoon, SK S7K 5A2
Canada
(306) 966-7818
Web site: http://www.usask.ca/antiquities
The Museum of Antiquities seeks to represent the art of major ancient civilizations through carefully crafted replicas as well as original pieces. Workshops, events, and other educational programs are designed to promote interest in the ancient world.

Museum of Classical Antiquities
Department of Classics and Religious Studies
Arts Hall
70 Laurier Avenue East, Room 102
Ottawa, ON K1N 6N5
Canada

(613) 562-5714
Web site: http://www.cla-srs.uottawa.ca/eng/musee_greco.html
The museum showcases artifacts from the daily lives of ancient Romans and Greeks.

University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology
3260 South Street
Philadelphia, PA 19104
(215) 898-4000
Web site: http://www.penn.museum
The university has an extensive collection of objects from ancient Rome and many other ancient cultures. Podcasts and other educational resources complement the exhibits.

## Web Sites

Due to the changing nature of Internet links, Rosen Educational Services has developed an online list of Web sites related to the subject of this book. This site is updated regularly. Please use this link to access the list:

http://www.rosenlinks.com/ancv/rome

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